

THE TWENTY SANGHA

Having previously explained the ten topics of the ten practice instructions, particularly the three objects of refuge (during the IBD spring course of 2012), which are the third topic, next comes an extensive explanation of the Sangha Jewel. The Sangha Jewel here refers to the Sangha in the strictest sense, that is, it refers to Arya beings who have directly realized the lack of inherent existence. Therefore, the extensive presentation of the Sangha Jewel is in fact an extensive presentation of different types of Aryas. (Please note that the explanations given here are from the point of view of the Madhyamika Prasangika School.)

The *Perfection of Wisdom Sutra in One Hundred Thousand Verses* lists 48 Sangha. As it is difficult to understand the 48 types they are condensed into 20 types. The twenty Sangha represent a classification of Hinayana Aryas (i.e. chiefly Hearer Aryas) who differ in terms of the realms they are reborn in, their attainments, the number of lives remaining before they attain the state of a foe-destroyer, etc. They are also called the metaphorical Sangha (*mtshon byed dge 'dun*, pronounced: *tshoen je ge duen*) because they illustrate particular Mahayana Aryas. The Mahayana Aryas illustrated here are called the 'actual' Sangha (*don gyi dge 'dun*, pronounced: *doen gyi ge duen*) - 'actual' in the sense that they are the Sangha that is illustrated.

The twenty Sangha can be further condensed into eight Aryas. The eight Aryas refer to four *approachers to the results*, and four *abiders in the results*. The results are:

- 1) The result of stream-enterer (*rgyun zhugs kyi 'bras bu*)
- 2) The result of once-returner (*phyir 'ong gi 'bras bu*)
- 3) The result of non-returner (*phyir mi 'ong gi 'bras bu*)
- 4) The result of foe-destroyer (*dgra bcom gyi 'bras bu*)

The four *approachers to the results* are:

1. Approacher to stream-enterer (*rgyun zhugs zhug pa*)
2. Approacher to once-returner (*phyir 'ong zhugs pa*)
3. Approacher to non-returner (*phyir mi 'ong zhugs pa*)
4. Approacher to foe-destroyer (*dgra bcom zhugs pa*)

The four *abiders in the result* are:

1. Abider in the result of stream-enterer (*rgyun zhugs 'bras gnas*)
2. Abider in the result of once-returner (*phyir 'ong 'bras gnas*)
3. Abider in the result of non-returner (*phyir mi 'ong 'bras gnas*)
4. Abider in the result of foe-destroyer. (*dgra bcom 'bras gnas*)

Since the eight types of Sangha/Aryas and the four results are explained from the point of view of Hinayana Aryas it is important to understand the five paths Hinayana practitioners cultivate in their mental continua in order first to become Aryas and then to reach the state of foe-destroyers. The five Hinayana paths are:

- (1) The Hinayana path of accumulation
- (2) The Hinayana path of preparation
- (3) The Hinayana path of seeing
- (4) The Hinayana path of meditation
- (5) The Hinayana path of no-more-learning

The Hinayana path of accumulation

The entryway to the Hinayana path is Hinayana renunciation, i.e. the sincere aspiration to attain self-liberation. Once practitioners generate such renunciation they enter the Hinayana path of accumulation. Hearer and Solitary Realizer trainees on the Hinayana path of accumulation have to accumulate sufficient merit to be able to proceed to the next path. Therefore they meditate on the four noble truths, the twelve links of dependent arising, love, compassion, generosity, and so forth.

Furthermore, unless practitioners realized emptiness *before* they entered the path of accumulation, they must now reflect on the various reasons that establish the ultimate nature of reality until they are able to

infer the lack of true existence of phenomena and thereby newly and conceptually realize emptiness, i.e. realize emptiness with an inferential cognizer.

Additionally, unless they attained it before entering the path of accumulation, Hinayana practitioners must also develop calm abiding. The attainment of calm abiding is followed by the cultivation of the union of calm abiding and special insight taking to mind an object other than emptiness. Once such a union is attained, trainees set out to develop the union of calm abiding and special insight conceptually realizing emptiness. The first moment of such a union marks the first moment of the path of preparation.

The Hinayana path of preparation

The Hinayana path of preparation is attained when practitioners who aspire to attain self-liberation generate the union of calm abiding and special insight conceptually realizing emptiness. Such a union enables them to gradually undermine the different coarser and subtler types of ignorance that perceive true existence. Therefore, like the Mahayana path of preparation, the Hinayana path of preparation can also be categorized into the four stages of heat, peak, forbearance, and supreme Dharma, each of which can be subdivided into small, middling, and great heat, small, middling, and great peak, and so forth. When during the four stages, Hearer and Solitary Realizer practitioners rise from the conceptual realization of emptiness, they continue to engage in the accumulation of merit by meditating on the four noble truths, the twelve links of dependent arising, love, compassion, and so forth.

Furthermore, by repeatedly familiarizing themselves with the union of calm abiding and special insight that conceptually realizes emptiness, practitioners come closer to realizing emptiness directly. Once they generate the union of calm abiding and special insight directly realizing emptiness, they attain the path of seeing.

The Hinayana paths of accumulation and preparation are both ordinary paths, i.e. paths in the continua of trainees who have not yet directly realized emptiness.

The Hinayana path of seeing

The first moment of the Hinayana path of seeing is marked by the meditative equipoise that *directly* realizes emptiness. This first moment is an uninterrupted path which eliminates intellectually acquired afflictive obstructions. The uninterrupted path is followed by the path of release. It also directly realizes emptiness and achieves the cessation of intellectually acquired afflictive obstructions.

Thereafter, Hearer and Solitary Realizer practitioners rise from the meditative equipoise, and with the subsequent attainment paths they engage in the accumulation of merit by meditating on the four noble truths, generosity, and so forth.

With the attainment of the path of seeing, Hinayana trainees become Aryas, for they directly realize emptiness. Hence, the attainment of the path of seeing also marks the attainment of the first superior or Arya path, since the three Hinayana paths of seeing, meditation, and no-more-learning are superior/Arya paths.

When practitioners who have attained the subsequent attainment paths of the Hinayana path of seeing once again enter into a meditative equipoise that directly realizes emptiness and serves as the direct antidote to the coarsest *innate* afflictive obstructions, their Arya path becomes the Hinayana path of meditation. Therefore, the first moment of the uninterrupted path that irrevocably eliminates the coarsest *innate* afflictive obstructions, and is generated after the subsequent attainment paths of the path of seeing, marks the first moment of the Hinayana path of meditation.

The Hinayana path of meditation

As just explained, the Hinayana path of meditation is attained when Hearer and Solitary Realizer practitioners attain the meditative equipoise that directly realizes emptiness and eliminates the coarsest type of innate afflictive obstructions, i.e. big-big (the first type of) innate afflictive obstructions. As explained in Handout 15 innate afflictive obstructions can be divided into nine types: big-big, medium-big, small-big, big-medium, medium-medium, small-medium, big-small, medium-small, and small-small innate afflictive obstructions. The former obstructions are coarser and easier to remove than the latter so that big-big innate obstructions are the coarsest type of innate afflictive obstructions and small-small the subtlest.